

To: Cabinet
15 October 2024

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SEXUAL HEALTH

Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel's report to the Cabinet following the Panel's review into Sexual Health, and to seek approval of the Panel's recommendations.
- 1.2 To provide the advice of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (SSO) to inform the Cabinet's decision whether to endorse the Panel's recommendations.

2 Chair of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel Introduction

- 2.1 As the Chair of the Health and Care O&S Panel it is my pleasure to present this report into sexual health services in the borough. During this review it became apparent how some young people have trouble in finding the relevant support when they have needed advice and help with sexual health. This was confirmed with our findings and stated by the end users during the youth survey. Nonetheless, it was encouraging to discover that the Council is working hard with Public Health England (PHE), Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT) and young people to start addressing these issues. The panel took the opportunity to speak with the service provider BHFT to ascertain any problems they had been having in providing the best service for our young residents and we were encouraged by how hard they were working and how receptive they were in improving the excellent service they already offer.
- 2.2 Borough priorities: engaged and healthy communities

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 **That the Cabinet considers whether to agree the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel's recommendations, as set out in the panel report (attached as Appendix A) and paragraph 6.5 of this report, taking into account the comments of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer.**

4 Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 4.1 It is the role of the SSO to advise the Council on any issues or concerns that may arise about the operation of the scrutiny function and the SSO may on occasion be required to make a determination about what the law says and how this should be applied to any particular situation. In carrying out this statutory role, there is a need to

have a nuanced and meaningful understanding of the scrutiny function in order to accurately make judgments about its operation when disagreements or other issues arise.

- 4.2 The SSO is responsible for ensuring that the scrutiny function is adequately resourced and that service departments and partners are contributing sufficiently to reviews to ensure that they are effective.
- 4.3 The SSO is also responsible for providing advice to the Commission on whether the recommendations within review reports are robust, taking account of resource, legal, climate change, equalities, health and wellbeing and strategic risk implications.

5 Alternative options considered

- 5.1 The Cabinet could decide:
 - to agree the recommendations as set out in the panel's report
 - to agree the recommendations in part
 - to ask for further work to be recognising that this would delay the panel's next piece of work
 - to note the panel report

6 Supporting information

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission commissioned the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel to carry out a review into sexual health as part of the overview and scrutiny four-year work programme, which has been developed to track themes within the new Council Plan.
- 6.2 In support of this review a broad range of witnesses gave evidence putting the panel in a good position to use this intelligence to frame the review and produce insightful recommendations.
- 6.3 The panel was supported by a Governance and Scrutiny Officer who supported the panel to draw up the scope of the review and prepare an evidence pack of relevant information; to facilitate a number of panel sessions to interview a range of contributors; to draw out findings from the panel's investigation, and to prepare a review report. This involved in the region of 200 hours of scrutiny officer time and 5 hours 45 minutes of panel meetings.
- 6.4 In summary it is the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's view that this review activity had adequate resources. The majority of review activity took place between March 2024 and May 2024. The comments from the relevant officers and partners set out below don't indicate any concerns with the standard of the report or the proposed recommendations. There are no financial or legal implications arising from the report.
- 6.5 The Commission considered the panel's recommendations on 29 August 2024 and agreed the recommendations to be considered by the Cabinet. The reasons for making these recommendations are set out in the panel report. These recommendations are:

1. **Advise schools to change website restrictions to allow young people to access services such as NHS Choices, Brook and Safe Sex Berkshire.** (review in 6 months)
2. **Make sure the OxWell student survey includes questions to obtain the views of young people regarding sex education they receive.** This will be fed back to individual schools to be taken into consideration when reviewing policies. (review in 12 months)
3. **Make sure young people's views of the services are sought by public health as part of the service development improvement plan with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT).**
Take this information forward for consideration in the next contract tender process. Make sure views captured in the survey in April 2024 are used to inform service development. Use an engagement plan to make sure a representative sample of young people will be reached (review in 6 months)
4. **Request Garden Clinic attendance data from BHFT that is specific to Bracknell residents for review by the Cabinet member.**
To differentiate those patients referred from Bracknell due to medical needs and those who went to Slough due to lack of availability in Bracknell. This will be reviewed by the Cabinet member within 6 months ahead of the next contract renewal which is due 1 July 2026. (review in 6 months)
5. **Improve promotion and awareness of sexual health services for young people.**
A key aim is to help to normalise sexual health and reduce the stigma around it through:
 - Promoting sexual health services on school websites
 - Increasing leaflets and signage in pharmacies
 - Greater visibility of information on Safe Sex Berkshire Website
 - Improve promotion of the services that pharmacies offer regarding sexual health (review in 6 Months)

7 Consultation and other considerations

Legal Advice

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report and its recommendations.

Financial Advice

- 7.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Other consultation responses

- 7.3 There are no other consultation responses.

Equalities impact assessment

- 7.4 The review scope, activities and recommendations were all considered in the initial equalities screening attached at Appendix B.

Strategic risk management issues

- 7.5 There are no specific strategic risk management issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

Climate change and ecological impact

- 7.6 The recommendations in section 2 above are expected to:
Have no impact on emissions of CO₂.

Health & wellbeing considerations

- 7.7 The Council is committed to building a healthy community and the recommendations in this report will contribute to this.

Background Papers

None

Contacts for further information

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